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UNCLAS BOGOTA 012903

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GOC OFFERS TO MEET WITH FARC TO FACILITATE
PRISONER RELEASE

1. (U) On December 20, the GOC reiterated its willingness to revoke its extradition order against Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) Commander Ricardo Palmera (aka "Simon Trinidad") if the FARC releases 63 hostages, including the three U.S. contractors, before December 30. The GOC expanded on the proposal by offering to meet with members of the FARC in a church in any part of the country to finalize the prisoner release, but only if the FARC first releases a preliminary group of hostages. The Roman Catholic Church of Colombia would be responsible for the FARC members' safe passage to and from the proposed meeting.

2. (U) Unofficial translation of the GOC's communique:

Begin translation:

The government reiterates its willingness to revoke the extradition of Simon Trinidad if, before December 30, the FARC releases 63 kidnapped Colombians and foreigners.

The government is willing to meet immediately with the FARC in any church, rural or urban, in the country, if they first release a preliminary group of hostages as a gesture of good will. The meeting's only purpose would be to perfect the agreement to facilitate the release of all 63 hostages before December 30.

The movement of the members of the FARC to the meeting place and their return would be carried out under protection from the Church of Colombia.

End translation.

WOOD